



Building Community. Kindling Hope. Seeding Change.



SOCIAL JUSTICE, RACE & EQUITY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented to the Brookhaven City Council, December 14, 2021



The Courage to Lead in Uncertain Times

The televised murder of George Floyd in May 2020 at the hands of Minneapolis police was just one of a long line of harrowing and fatal encounters between Black people and law enforcement throughout the history of this country. The unprecedented protests that followed – against the backdrop of Covid-19’s revelation of deep inequity buried within the U.S. socio-economic system – launched a long overdue national discussion on systemic racism in the United States.



The City of Brookhaven’s (“City”) elected officials embraced this opportunity to take courageous and much-needed action. They took the first step by establishing a citizen-led forum to launch a dialogue on race, equity, and inclusion. In September 2020, the Brookhaven City Council unanimously approved legislation to create the [Social Justice, Race and Equity Commission](#) (SJREC). The City appointed 37 leaders, representing the deep diversity of the community, to serve on the Commission. These dedicated leaders accepted the charge to develop policy and practice recommendations to advance social justice and racial equity in the communities and workplaces of Brookhaven. The Commission identified four areas for focus – Hiring & Retention, the Brookhaven Mission, Vision & Charter, Police Accountability & Legitimacy¹, and Procurement & Contracting. Developed over 12 months, these recommendations are the foundation of this report, and will be presented to the Mayor and City Council in December 2021.

- MARKERS OF DISTINCTION: Since its inception in 2012, the City of Brookhaven has strived to create a culture of transparency, innovation, and inclusion.
- The City maintains an online transparency portal that is open to the public and allows access to data and information on the City’s finances, public meetings, policing, land development, and other operations.²
 - Since 2017, the City of Brookhaven has held the distinction of being a “Welcoming City” by Welcoming America, a national nonprofit organization that helps local governments build plans and policies that encourage inclusivity and a sense of belonging.³

1 Note: Originally titled “Policy Accountability and Continuum of Force”
2 <https://www.brookhavenga.gov/transparency>
3 <https://www.ajc.com/news/local/city-brookhaven-officially-joins-the-welcoming-america-network/0iQnFeUxmhtjm2DLUUneM/>

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To view the appendix, visit brookhavenga.gov/SJREC.

Acknowledgements

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Petite Violette
The Latin American Association
Villa Christina

Thought & Strategy Partners

Atlanta Regional Commission
City of Decatur
CSI Crane
City of Dallas, TX
Inclusivv (formerly Civic Dinners)
Partnership for Southern Equity

“Belong Here”

As a current resident, these words on Brookhaven’s tagline deeply resonate with me. As I contemplated the city I would call home, I remember coming back to Brookhaven over and over again and feeling “at home.” That feeling stayed with me and making Brookhaven my home still proves to be the best decision I’ve made for me and my family. Once I got settled, I felt a deep desire to make new connections, get more involved, and seek opportunities that would allow me to give back within the Brookhaven community. That feeling heightened after the murder of George Floyd.

During my daily walks, which many of us began during the height of the pandemic, my eyes opened a little wider. Did yours? Did you notice who you walked by and said hello to and those you never saw or who didn’t look like you? My inhales and exhales became a bit more purposeful when I was forced to slow down. It was in those moments that I felt there was more we could and should do as a city to take a bolder stance on social justice and race relations. It was in those moments I envisioned opportunities to have community conversations even before the Commission was formed. This led me to reach out to the Mayor and others to express my desire to get involved and to learn more about the City’s intentions because I felt there was an abundance of opportunity in the moment we were in.

Since 2020, Covid-19 and a national movement for social justice and racial equity has fundamentally impacted and shifted understanding of our values and priorities as a society. Brookhaven has not been immune to these disruptions: many of our neighbors, especially those who are Hispanic, Black, or living close to the edge of poverty, have historically and systematically been disproportionately impacted by lack of access and opportunity.

Consequently, I was honored to be invited to serve on the Social Justice, Race & Equity Commission by the Brookhaven Mayor and City Council. I saw my service as an opportunity to lock arms with other concerned citizens eager to help Brookhaven distinguish itself as a model of equity and inclusion. We have succeeded in *Building Community* with one another and the City’s nonprofits through our partnerships and outreach. We bear witness to our ability to *Kindle*

Hope amongst a broad swath of our City’s residents, fueled by more than 41 conversations on race and belonging. And, through the thoughtful recommendations contained in this report, we are Seeding Change to create a stronger, more welcoming City.

I am grateful for the bold and sincere leadership of our elected officials and City leadership. I am also appreciative of John H. Funny, founding Commission Chair and newly elected Councilperson for District 4, who, along with Madeline Simmons, Brookhaven City Councilperson for District 3, provided decisive leadership and foresight to launch the Commission.

Most importantly, I am honored to have had the opportunity to work alongside some of the smartest and most resolute people in this community. Commission members have worked tirelessly, sacrificing personal and family time to complete what we all considered our civic duty. Together we have run the first leg of the race; moving forward, we will achieve success alongside Brookhaven’s talented professional staff, businesses, and civic and faith partners.

As Brookhaven begins its transformation to a more just, equitable and sustainable City, we must remain patient and committed. We must simultaneously align who we are (our culture), what we believe (our vision), and what we do (our programs, services, and budgets) - while being explicit and transparent about our pledge for social justice, equity, and access to all who live, work, and play in Brookhaven.

Brookhaven, thank you for trusting us. We encourage all citizens of our city to commit to the work ahead as we imagine a city where race, class, geography, and other barriers to opportunity do not stymie opportunity.

A Brookhaven where we all belong.



Tywana Minor
Chair, Social Justice,
Race & Equity Commission

Building Community. Kindling Hope. Seeding Change.

This report is about many things:

- The **building** of community to increase equity and social justice within the City of Brookhaven
- The **kindling** of hope across and within Brookhaven’s diverse communities, that all perspectives and experiences will be welcomed and appreciated
- The **seeding** of change initiated by Brookhaven city leadership to ensure greater inclusion, safety, and access to opportunity

But mostly, this report is about **trust** as the basis for authentic relationships and growth:

- Trust that has developed between Social Justice, Race & Equity Commission members and city leaders to embrace and co-create their futures together
- Trust that has emerged between more than thirty diverse, caring Brookhaven neighbors through honest dialogue and shared labor on the Commission
- Trust that has spread among the Commission, city leaders and Brookhaven residents, born of authentic desire to make Brookhaven more equitable and accessible
- Trust that has sparked in Brookhaven employees, inviting their input and participation in a more equitable workplace and community
- **Trust that has accelerated a promise to Brookhaven’s future residents, that the work launched by the City and Commission will pave the way to a more equitable and inclusive city for generations to come**

Background

The televised murder of George Floyd in May 2020 at the hands of Minneapolis police was one of a long line of fatal encounters between Black people and law enforcement. Floyd’s murder came six weeks after police in Louisville, Kentucky, fatally shot unarmed Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman, during a midnight “no-knock” raid on her home. It came 10 weeks after the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man, who was stalked by a White father and son in a pickup truck as he jogged in Glynn County,

Georgia. In a country in which Black people are three times more likely to be killed by police than White people – and 1.3 times more likely to be unarmed when killed by police⁴ – and amidst the Covid-19 pandemic’s revelation of the historically deep inequity embedded in America’s socio-economic and public systems, Floyd’s murder launched a long overdue national discussion on systemic racism in the United States.

In September 2020, the Brookhaven Mayor and City Council established the [Social Justice, Race and Equity Commission](#) (SJREC). The City appointed 37 leaders, representing the deep diversity of the community, to serve on the Commission and charged them with recommending policies and practices to advance social justice and racial equity, focusing on Hiring & Retention, the Brookhaven Mission, Vision & Charter, Police Accountability & Legitimacy⁵, and Procurement & Contracting. Developed over 12 months, the Commission’s recommendations are the foundation of this report and will be presented to the Mayor and City Council in December 2021.

Commission Approach and Structure

Through an iterative process dubbed “GOAL” – Grounding, Organizing, Aligning, and Leading – Commission members increased their awareness and understanding of the historic origins and current impacts of racial inequity; the practice and value of engaging the diverse perspectives of Brookhaven residents; how the City of Brookhaven “works” from a practical and personal perspective; and how to best participate in the co-creation of new, equitable institutional practices.

To be successful, the Commission had to establish an efficient structure that leveraged everyone’s talents and resources. Accordingly, every month for 12 months, members met as a full Commission as well as in Subcommittees focused on the Commission’s four areas of focus. It was in the Subcommittees that Commission members examined relevant data that pointed to potential inequities and held critical deliberations to lead to thoughtful recommendations. Subcommittees and other Commission teams met as needed for deeper discussions, or to coordinate logistics, and support effective communications.

The Commission also benefited from a unique and powerful alliance with the Kettering Foundation, a national research organization focused on building democracy.

4 <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/05/25/police-brutality-statistics-shootings-george-floyd-489803>

5 Originally titled “Policy Accountability and Continuum of Force”

Community Input & Engagement

Despite widespread social turbulence and uncertainty resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and unprecedented demonstrations for racial and social justice, Commission members sought to actively engage Brookhaven’s diverse community in a variety of ways including surveys, community pop-up events, district-based public meetings, and public comment in Commission meetings. A highlight of the Commission’s community outreach was hosting “Civic Dinners” – structured conversations on race and belonging – held virtually as well as in homes, public venues, community centers, and restaurants across the city.



More than 80% of all survey respondents felt that the City of Brookhaven should make racial equity a significant or top priority. This input was critical to informing and shaping the Commission’s recommendations.

Recommendation Development

After months of structured data review and community and stakeholder input, the Subcommittees formulated their recommendations for policy and practice changes to drive greater equity in and throughout the City of Brookhaven.

Recommendations were prioritized using the following criteria⁶:

- Addresses racial/social inequity
- Data-driven
- Culturally inclusive
- Environmentally responsible
- Technically feasible
- Financially viable
- Strong public support

6 Developed by Commission members and City staff

Noteworthy Learnings

In addition to the myriad challenges associated with Covid-19, the Commission’s work was impacted by lackluster levels of engagement with and by Brookhaven’s Hispanic communities; less than anticipated participation at public events; competing work and personal commitments for Commission members; and challenges associated with virtual convening. These learnings as well as others are detailed in the full Report.

Equity as an Imperative

Conversations about racial equity are often fraught with tension and discomfort. Everyone possesses preconceived ideas, beliefs, and perspectives about “different” races and ethnicities. However, the inclusive, holistic nature of equity, defined as “just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential,” provides a mandate for all facets of City planning, programming, services, and budgets. Feedback from the Commission’s community input and engagement efforts indicated that Brookhaven residents are ready to fully embrace and embed equity in the City’s operations and culture: 87% of Brookhaven residents cared “deeply” or “significantly” about racial equity.

BY THE NUMBERS:



Brookhaven Social Justice, Race & Equity Commission Recommendations

Cross-Cutting Recommendations

(recommendations inclusive of or foundational to the focus-area recommendations)

- Establish a broad and diverse citizen-led group to provide accountability and sustain robust community engagement to ensure broad and diverse community insight and perspective, implement ongoing opportunities for exposure, dialogue, and training on principles of social justice, racial equity, and inclusion, and monitor implementation of the City of Brookhaven’s equitable policies and practices.
- Embed racial equity principles and practices in all City of Brookhaven departments and operations, including providing enterprise-level education and training of City staff, conducting equity analyses of programs, services and communications, and developing strategic goals and metrics to achieve and ensure equity.
- Incorporate and commit to deliberate, strategic inclusion of Brookhaven’s diverse racial and ethnic groups in all Brookhaven planning processes, boards, commissions, and other efforts. Prioritize increased engagement of Hispanic and immigrant communities.
- Conduct a comprehensive community “equity assessment” to understand Brookhaven residents’ perceptions, understanding and expectations for racial equity, diversity, access, and social justice in the City. Consider aligning this assessment with other City planning processes.
- Conduct an enterprise-wide knowledge management and technology assessment to ensure the City’s ability to capture key equity data.

Hiring & Retention

- Establish a consistent policy of conducting written and in-person exit interviews with all departing City of Brookhaven employees.
- Develop and enforce equitable recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and retention policies and practices.
- Develop and implement policies and procedures to capture relevant equity and other personnel data for analysis to address trends and issues related to staff hiring and retention.



Mission & Vision

- Utilize an open and transparent process that intentionally engages a diverse representation of community stakeholders to rewrite the City of Brookhaven’s mission and vision statements. Include City staff, residents, business owners, students, and nonprofits.
- Conduct an equity review of the City of Brookhaven’s charter every five years, concurrent with the City’s mandated charter review.



Police Accountability & Legitimacy

- Uniformly capture and report policing data to provide an accurate representation of Brookhaven Police Department (BPD) interactions with people who identify as Hispanic as compared to other races.
- Increase BPD’s cultural awareness and competency by implementing a number of tools and programs, including an intercultural competency assessment, equity audit, intercultural council, and certification program.
- Increase the availability of mental health professionals dedicated to the City of Brookhaven such that they can be called on at night and on weekends to assist and/or intervene in appropriate situations with the BPD.
- Foster greater community trust by 1) annually surveying the Brookhaven community on their perceptions of BPD, 2) redesigning BPD’s community engagement approach to be program and goals oriented, 3) regularly training officers on principles of community policing, and 4) contracting an external auditor to review complaint data.



Procurement & Contracting

- Ensure that Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are written in plain language and minimize the use of technical jargon when appropriate.
- Implement a simplified, easily understood, accessible, and streamlined contract process and communication channel for all vendors.
- Initiate more frequent reviews/assessments of the City’s procurement and contracting processes.
- Commit to awarding 33.3% of all funds spent by the City on procurement and contracting to businesses identified as minority-owned, with the aim to increase this percentage by at least 5% per year, each subsequent year.



Building Community

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” – Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

2020 proved to be one of the most turbulent years in US history. Every corner of our country was struck by environmental disasters, impacted by national demonstrations, and affected by divisive, partisan politics – all against the backdrop of a novel and deadly virus – Covid-19 – that to date has infected 46 million globally, with more than 750,000 Americans dead from resulting complications. The Covid-19 pandemic – which revealed multiple layers of inequity buried within the U.S. socio-economic system – and the murder of George Floyd provoked a long-overdue demand for racial equity and social justice.

A Deadly Pandemic

Covid-19 radically altered production, services, and logistics across America’s private and public sectors and irreparably changed all aspects of our lives. The pandemic precipitated widespread upheaval for communities and families, highlighted by disrupted schooling and unprecedented learning loss for students; employment and income instability; social isolation; and a surge of mental health diagnoses. The pandemic also revealed glaring social inequities given its disproportionate impact among racial and ethnic minority groups who have systematically lacked access to the basic necessary safety nets essential to health, well-being, and quality of life.⁷

A War Horn for Racial Justice

Months after the global pandemic altered the very nature of our collective and individual lives, George Floyd’s murder televised world-wide the undeniable realities of racial discrimination, police misconduct, and fatal use of force by law enforcement officials. For racial and ethnic communities, particularly Black Americans, George Floyd was just one of many examples, over lifetimes, which demonstrated police misconduct without accountability and once more raised questions about police officers’ attitudes towards racial and ethnic minority groups, protesters, and others. Social justice

movements such as Black Lives Matter and Color of Change grew in number and strength as Floyd’s murder, enacted in broad daylight, moved public perception of law enforcement into the spotlight. By the end of June 2020, an estimated 15 million people had participated in demonstrations in support of racial justice across the United States and worldwide. The City of Atlanta, Brookhaven’s adjacent neighbor, was the scene of many demonstrations and events, some of which turned volatile. The demand for change was tremendous.

Citizen Apathy and Division

The path to true democracy is one that ensures that all citizens are fundamentally treated as equal under the law. This necessitates that all communities have access to power and agency; that democratic policies and structures and institutions are fair and sound; and that our culture – from the hyper-local level to the national level – fuels and embraces authentic citizen engagement. However, over the past several decades, the relationship between citizens and government has become deeply fractured and public participation continues to decline. According to the Kettering Foundation report, *Governing with The People*,⁸ citizens tend to see many of our problems as the result of self-inflicted wounds, and they usually blame politicians. On the other hand, elected and appointed officials in our governing institutions may blame what they see on an irresponsible citizenry.

Americans are also deeply fractured politically. People on opposite ends of the political spectrum are voicing and enacting both disagreement and dislike for “the other side,” manifested by increasing incivility and disrespect. According to a recent NPR poll⁹, a majority of respondents feel the country’s “civility crisis” is deepening and that a majority of Americans fear it will lead to violence.

It is widely accepted that this political and social disunity is both encouraged and fueled by social media conglomerates and the virtual reality of the internet. While social media has made it easier than ever for citizens to obtain, form, and share opinions about public issues and to engage in conversations that matter to them, these online spaces rarely encourage citizens to listen, employ reason, and communicate in ways that are solutions-oriented. The Commission experienced this dichotomy during its community input and engagement phase, discussed later in this report.

7 <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/index.htm>
8 https://www.kettering.org/sites/default/files/product-downloads/connections_2019_0.pdf
9 http://maristpoll.marist.edu/?page_id=43329%23sthash.LoxbWsk5.dpbs%20#sthash.ZosONIwZ.gMcJF83i.dpbs

It was against this social backdrop that, in late 2020, Mayor John Ernst and the Brookhaven City Council established the Brookhaven Social Justice, Race & Equity Commission. Brookhaven’s leaders demonstrated foresight and courage to reach out to a diverse group of citizens and charge them with an ambitious task: to spend the next 12 months in an unprecedented opportunity to affirm the core values of equity, inclusion, and social justice that would define their city.

A Word on Equity

Equity – the just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

Racial equity – the condition that would be achieved if one’s racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares.

Social justice – the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities.

The Commission adopted the following definition of equity: “Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.” Although the Commission’s work focused on racial equity and social justice, there was early and broad acknowledgment by Commission members of the marginalization of other groups predicated on gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, and other identities.

Racial Equity

Brookhaven officials understood that the creation and perpetuation of racial and social inequity has been baked into the groundwater of public systems. They also astutely recognized that a “one size fits all” approach is rarely successful and that race can be an issue that keeps other marginalized communities from effectively coming together. Therefore, they decided that the Commission would focus its efforts on dialogue and relationship building that could, over time, lead to policy and institutional strategies to eliminate racial and ethnic inequities. As Brookhaven deepens its ability to understand, interrogate, and eliminate the root causes of racial inequity, it will be better equipped to impact other marginalized groups.

To identify indications of racial inequity through data collection and discussions, the Commission utilized the “4P Assessment”¹⁰ below:



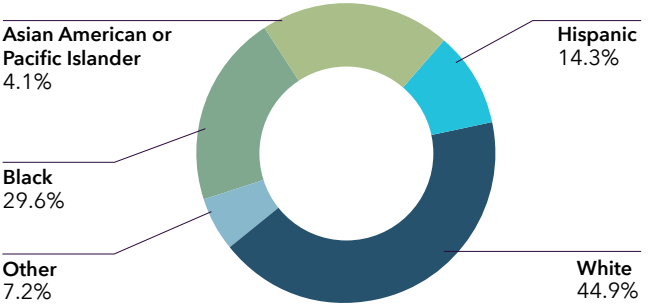
10 The assessment tool is adapted from the following resources: *The SP Equity and Empowerment Lens* by Multnomah County and *The Racial Equity Impact Assessment Guide* by Race Forward

Noteworthy Learnings

Over the course of the Commission’s year of implementation there were many issues that impacted the work. Several are identified below:

1 Capturing the full breadth of Brookhaven voices: The vast majority of community input received came from Black citizens (9.6% of total population) and White citizens (57.2% of total population). Despite targeted efforts, the voices of Brookhaven’s Hispanic population (24.8% of total population) was minimally represented as were Asian American & Pacific Islanders (6.2% of total population) and other ethnic and racial groups. Some reasons for this included low participation at public forums and pop-ups – even at locations highly frequented by Hispanic citizens – and a lack of consistent access to Spanish and other language translation.

Community input did not align with population demographics (cited above):



Additionally, efforts to capture the voice of Brookhaven’s immigrant residents – a designation connected to but not synonymous with racial or ethnic identity – proved difficult. There are many concerns that prompt individuals to relocate to the United States, including economic instability, political strife, and better employment opportunities. Depending upon culture, country of origin, and time in the US, American concepts of “social justice” and “equity” were alternately ambiguous or unrelatable to many in Brookhaven’s ethnic immigrant communities.

Gaining more comprehensive resident perspectives on issues of race, equity, and social justice must be a priority moving forward to better understand how equity is experienced – or not – in the City of Brookhaven. Establishing relationships with community leaders and other influencers within these communities is likely to enhance the Commission’s ability to engage them, gain their trust, and hear their perspectives.

2 Community engagement: Robust community engagement can be challenging in the best of times. When communities and families are reeling from a pandemic and facing economic uncertainty, engagement becomes even more problematic. In 2021, the Commission adapted to this reality by being flexible with event cancellations, low turnout, technology issues, hybrid virtual and in-person sessions, and Covid-driven avoidance in public settings.

3 Fatigue: The Commission’s year-long process took a toll on the already busy lives of its members. Commission members were requested to attend a minimum of two monthly meetings (Commission leadership committed to more), and all were encouraged to “host” community input sessions and events. Not unexpectedly, family, work and other responsibilities mitigated members’ ability to consistently participate.

“...our subcommittee could have used more time because of work commitments. Everyone is very busy.”

4 Personnel changes: During 2021, several key Brookhaven staff left the City’s employ. In addition, some Commissioners transitioned professional roles and/or relocated, impacting their ability to participate. These changes necessitated adjustments in leadership and work assignments.

5 Virtual convening: With such heavy reliance on video conferencing, the Commission experienced inevitable technology challenges, including faulty internet links, unstable, freezing internet connectivity, echoing audio, and more. Additionally, City of Brookhaven policies and state-required Open Meetings mandates prevented the Commission from utilizing online “breakout rooms.” The inability to have small group conversations during Commission meetings limited the relationship building and understanding that result from more intimate dialogue.

According to a newly released national report¹¹, “The biggest challenges seen in virtual meetings today are interpersonal, such as the loss of collaboration and personal connection, with almost half reporting this as their number one concern.”

6 Equity - a big concept: Virtual interactions and the scope of Commission responsibilities reduced the amount of time available for critical, philosophical conversations that would lead Commission members to a deeper, shared understanding and vision on issues of racial equity and justice in Brookhaven. The challenge is illustrated by a statement on the Georgia Municipal Association website: “Facilitating conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion in an intense and powerful emotional environment, often reveals significant differences in worldviews or perspectives, resulting in disastrous consequences. The consequences create an atmosphere of tension, conflict, and fear that inevitably contributes to discomfort developing the hardening of biased views mitigating the probability of continuing dialogue.” Commissioners would have benefited from more in-person time to explore both their civic and personal perspectives (i.e., the distinction between racial inequity in the City vs. individual mindsets, biases, and opinions).

7 Seeking justice in highly political times: The Commission was the first of its kind in Brookhaven, not focused on traditional municipal issues, i.e., planning, infrastructure, parks & recreation, or tourism. For those unwilling or unprepared to engage in meaningful dialogue on critical yet amorphous issues of ‘racial equity’ and ‘inclusion,’ it was easy to position the Commission’s creation as being “political,” established to allay potential public unrest and give the impression that the government is “doing something.” Commission members recognized this potential and worked diligently to be authentic, transparently voicing their sincere desire and commitment to address these challenging issues.

8 Connections and intersections: Issues such as housing, community and economic development, arts and culture, and education are examples of common realities and experiences for all Brookhaven residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, income, or other characteristics. Although some of these issues are highlighted later in this report, given the Commission’s four focus areas, members did not have opportunities to more fully explore the equity implications and intersections between these more common experiences. As Brookhaven matures in its social justice and equity processes, thinking, and implementation, it will be better equipped to partner with, or even challenge, the county, state, and federal agencies that control access to, and regulation of, education, health care, mental health, courts, and more.



“Understand this if you understand nothing: it is a powerful thing to be seen” – Akwaeke Emezi, Freshwater

11 <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210818005225/en/ Employees-Crave-More-Social-Connection-and-Engagement-in-Virtual-Meetings-According-to-National-Study-from-Polly>

Kindling Hope

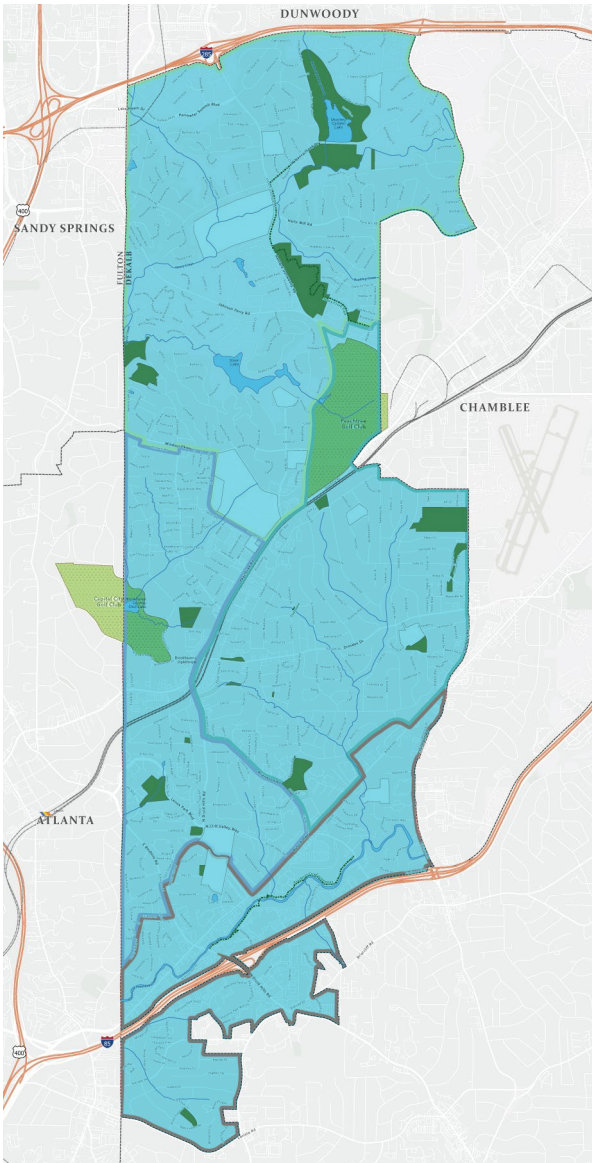
The City of Brookhaven is located on what was formerly a portion of unincorporated DeKalb County, Georgia. DeKalb residents in favor of cityhood began to organize in 2010 and in early 2011, state legislators proposed legislation that would allow for a vote to incorporate the city. Over the following year as the legislation passed through the Georgia General Assembly, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia would conduct a feasibility study that concluded the city would run a surplus on a \$25 million operating budget, validating proponents’ concept.¹² In July 2012, residents went to the polls to vote on forming the City of Brookhaven. Despite notable opposition and a close vote (55% to 45%), the bill passed and the City of Brookhaven was formed.

Brookhaven formed during metro Atlanta’s “Cityhood Movement.”¹³ Between 2005 and 2015, eight unincorporated neighborhoods in Georgia’s three largest counties – Fulton, Gwinnett, and DeKalb – voted to form their own cities. The proponents of cityhood most often cited a desire for more efficient leadership and services as their reasons for seeking incorporation.¹⁴

With the calling card, “Belong Here¹⁵”, Brookhaven stretches over 11.6 square miles in northeast DeKalb. It is made up of diverse neighborhoods from affluent (and predominantly White) Historic Brookhaven to the historic Black subdivision of Lynwood Park to the largely Hispanic Buford Highway Corridor. It shares borders with the City of Atlanta as well as Sandy Springs and Dunwoody (two other affluent cities that formed during the Cityhood Movement).

Governance and Operations

The City of Brookhaven is led by an elected mayor and four city council members, who each represent a different district. Day-to-day operations are led and managed by a professional city manager, who oversees a staff of roughly 180 employees and several contract vendors. The City operates four main operating departments: Parks & Recreation, Police, Public Works, and Community Development and many supporting departments as well as many boards and commissions.¹⁶

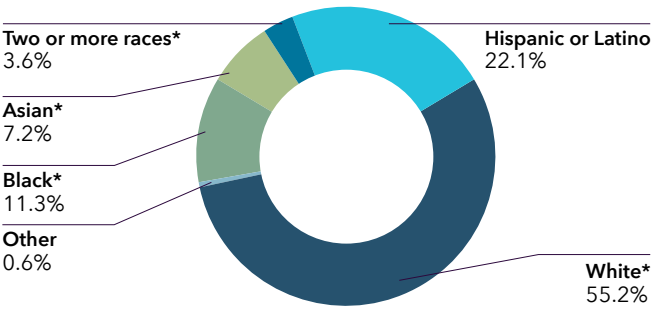


Demographics

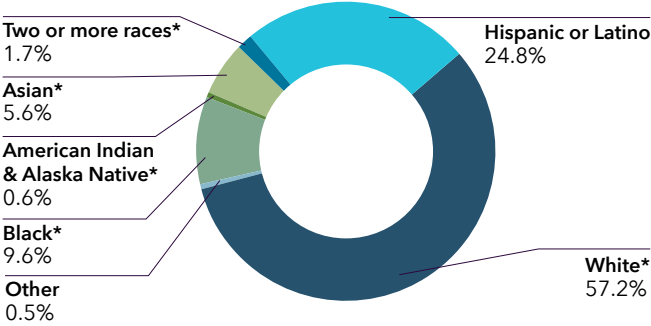
Today, Brookhaven has a population of about 55,000 residents.¹⁷ Compared to the metro Atlanta region, which has a median household income of \$74,082 and 38.6% of the population with a bachelor’s degree or higher¹⁸, the average Brookhaven resident is more educated and wealthier.

Between 2015 and 2020, Brookhaven’s White and Hispanic population decreased slightly (~2% each), while its Black and Asian population increased slightly (~2% each). Like the rest of metro Atlanta, Brookhaven is becoming increasingly diverse. In 2021, Brookhaven’s Esri Diversity Index¹⁹ score was 76.5, exceeding the diversity of several surrounding cities (such as Decatur and Dunwoody) as well as the metro Atlanta region.

Race/Ethnicity | 2020 Census



Race/Ethnicity | 2015 ACS



Races with an asterisk (*) do not include persons who also identify as Hispanic or Latino.

17 <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=16000000US1310944>
18 Atlanta Regional Commission
19 https://downloads.esri.com/esri_content_doc/dbl/us/J10170_US_Diversity_Index_2020.pdf



Total Population
55,161



Employment Rate
76.6%



Bachelor’s Degree
or Higher
67.4%



Median Household
Income
\$92,604



Total Housing Units
25,945



Without Healthcare
Coverage
15.1%



Total Households
22,349

12 <https://patch.com/georgia/brookhaven/brookhaven-feasibility-study-released>
13 <https://reporternewspapers.net/2012/12/16/how-brookhaven-came-to-be/>
14 <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/04/the-border-battles-of-atlanta/523884/>
15 Explore Brookhaven tag line
16 <https://www.brookhavenga.gov/community/page/city-brookhaven-ga>

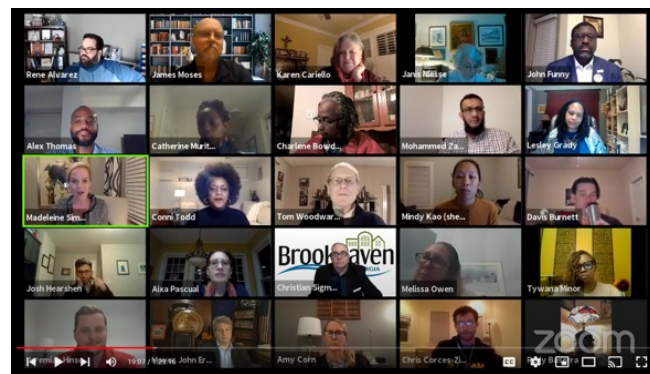
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

Establishing the Commission

Responding to nationwide protests against police brutality and racial injustice in 2020, the City of Brookhaven’s elected officials took the bold step of establishing a citizen-led forum to launch a dialogue on race, equity, and inclusion. In September of that same year, the Brookhaven City Council unanimously approved legislation to create the [Social Justice, Race and Equity Commission](#) and sought to include representatives from the civic, faith, education and business communities, all ages – from youth to seniors – and Brookhaven Character Area geographic locations. Following outreach to diverse organizations and individuals to ensure strategic and broad representation, the City and Mayor solicited applications for Commission members, to include a statement of interest. Concurrently, the City Manager identified key Brookhaven staff to support the Commission with critical data and context; an external social impact and facilitation firm, Chrysalis Lab, to facilitate, guide, and document the process; and a national partner, the Kettering Foundation, to provide expertise and resources.

Commission meetings were held virtually.



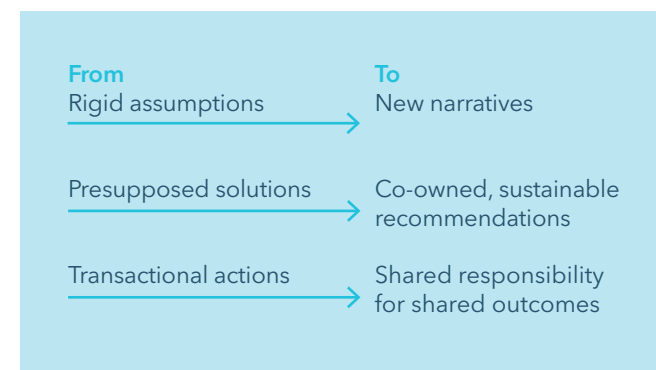
In December 2020, 37 diverse and excited Brookhaven residents and leaders convened for the inaugural meeting of the Social Justice, Race & Equity Commission. These individuals made a public pledge to commit precious time and talent to the ambitious task of creating recommendations to advance social justice and equity in the city, focusing in four areas – Hiring & Retention, the Brookhaven Mission, Vision & Charter, Police Accountability & Legitimacy, and Procurement & Contracting.

The Work of Co-Creation

When the Commission was established, Brookhaven’s elected and appointed officials faced a unique leadership opportunity and dual challenge: to build, strengthen, and sustain public commitment to ideals of racial equity and social inclusion while remaining efficient, accessible, and accountable to its constituents for day-to-day services. Participation on the Commission offered an unprecedented opportunity for the city’s residents to affirm the core values that define their individual and collective lives. Through focused intention and a commitment to learning and authenticity, the Commission’s work had the potential to pave the path to a future in which all Brookhaven residents feel empowered to engage actively and successfully in the democratic process.

The Approach

Through a deliberate, phased process titled “GOAL” – Grounding, Organizing, Aligning, and Leading – Commission members increased their awareness and understanding of the historic origins and current impacts of racial inequity; the practice and value of engaging the diverse perspectives of Brookhaven residents; how the City of Brookhaven “works” from a practical and personal perspective; and how to best participate in the co-creation of new, equitable institutional practices.



The Kettering Foundation - An Impactful Partnership

The Commission benefited from a unique alliance with the Kettering Foundation, a national research organization focused on building democracy. Consistent with the Commission’s approach of co-creation led and informed by Brookhaven residents, Kettering Foundation research is conducted from the perspective of citizens and focuses on what people can do collectively to address problems affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation. The Foundation was particularly interested in learning about the City of Brookhaven’s leadership actions, motivations, and

outcomes; realignment of its equitable professional practices; and its approaches to engage the public in addressing issues of race, equity, and inclusion.

Valerie Lemmie, Director of Exploratory Research, joined the coordinating team to provide professional expertise and access to the Foundation’s research in citizen-centered democracy. Ms. Lemmie’s prior experience as a city manager for multiple urban municipalities proved to be a perfect complement to provide insight on how public officials can work in more democratic and complementary ways with citizens to co-produce public goods and services.

*The Approach:
a phased process
titled GOAL -*
Grounding
Organizing
Aligning
Leading

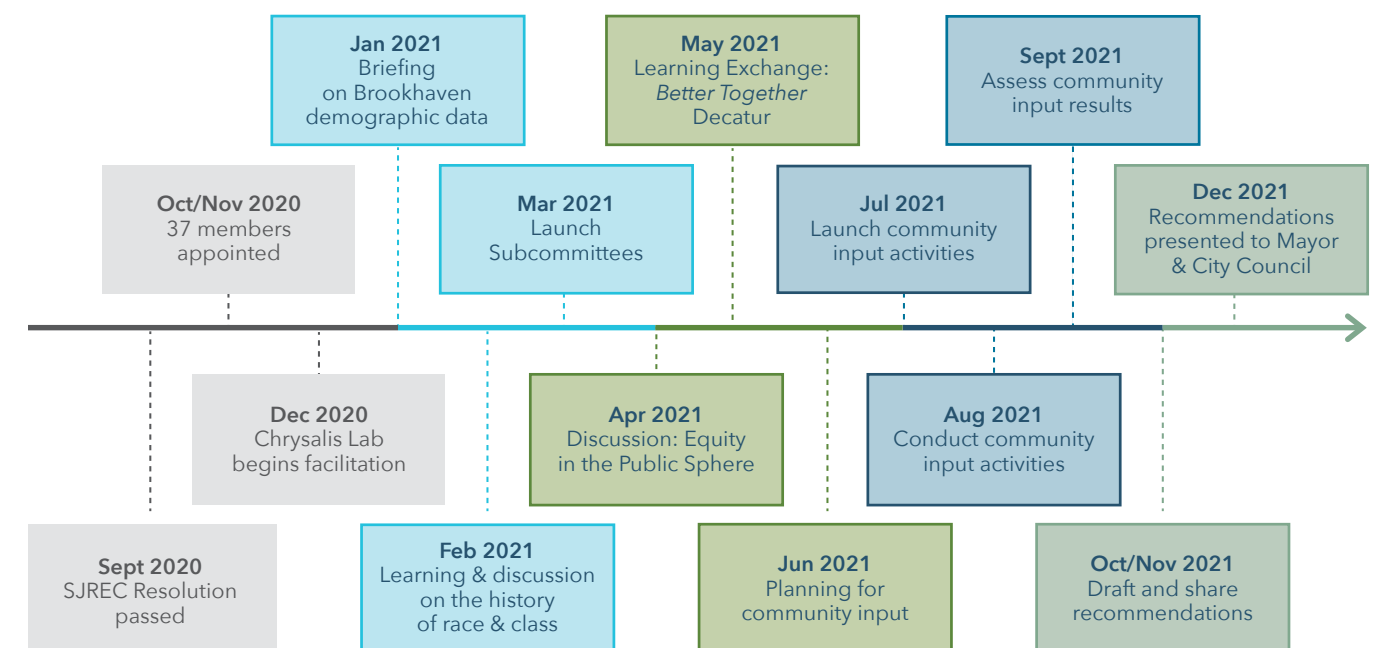
**Grounding
(JANUARY-MARCH)**
*Who are we and
what do we believe?
How do issues of
race and equity affect
Brookhaven families?*

**Organizing
(APRIL-JUNE)**
*How do we organize
ourselves for learning
and action?
How do we gain
community input?*

**Aligning
(JULY-SEPTEMBER)**
*What does the
community seek to
achieve? What are
our options and what
are the tradeoffs?*

**Leading
(OCTOBER-DECEMBER)**
*How do we guide the
city in areas of equity
and social justice?
How do we ensure
continued participation?*

Social Justice, Race & Equity Commission Timeline and Process:



Key Ingredients for Success

Learning

Commission sessions offered many opportunities for learning and growth and often included “Brookhaven History Moments,” which highlighted the history of Brookhaven neighborhoods. Following is an abbreviated list of topics (full list and speakers in Appendix):

January	Brookhaven Demographics
February	History of Race in America: <i>Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents</i>
March	Brookhaven City Primer Effective Principles of Citizen Engagement
April	Equity in the Public Sphere
May	The Equity Path - City of Decatur's <i>Better Together</i> Initiative
June	Facilitating Culture Change
July	Hearing From Community - A panel discussion
August	Why Stakeholder Engagement is Critical
September	Equity and Municipalities
October	Census 2020 & Implications for Brookhaven

Sharing

Commission sessions began with a “Moment of Inspiration,” most often offered by a Commission member, featuring motivating reflections and readings from diverse historic and contemporary texts. Commission members also participated in a book club, featuring two books: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou and *The Other Wes Moore* by Wes Moore. Book club meetings provided opportunities for members to expand their thinking and share perspectives in a less formal context.

The greatest opportunity for sharing occurred among Commission members and 200+ Brookhaven residents at 41 dinners hosted across the City. The opportunity to “break bread” together enabled residents to engage diverse voices and make genuine connections. More detail on the Civic Dinners is provided in the Community Input and Engagement section of this report.

“I enjoyed having a hard conversation with people in the community.”

“The opportunity to participate with folks from the Brookhaven community in an interactive forum. These types of activities help broaden the reach of the Commission’s work.”

Subcommittee engagement

Each month, Commission members met virtually in Subcommittees to delve into pertinent data and hold critical deliberations to develop strong recommendations. Three of the four Subcommittees also planned and implemented surveys to gather insights from a group of stakeholders critical to their respective areas. Some Subcommittees went the extra mile by hosting and attending a Civic Dinner or attending training.



Members of the Commission attended a full-day training sponsored by the Brookhaven Police Department.

Tools and Resources

Commission members were provided detailed guidance and support during their journey (See Appendix for more detail). Tools included:

- The 4P Assessment to identify instances of inequity
- Annotated meeting agendas for all Subcommittees
- Samples and templates for subcommittee work and deliverables
- Facilitation assistance at all meetings

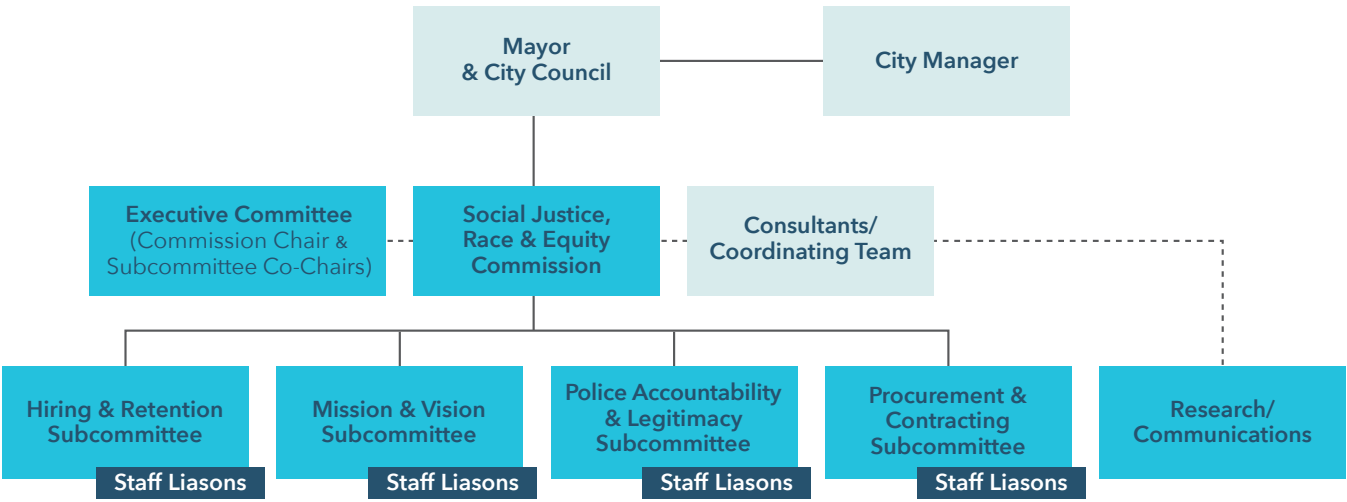
“The Civic Dinners were helpful to see other people’s perspective; to burst my bubble a little bit.”

Responsive Structure

The Commission established an efficient framework for implementation that leveraged all participants’ talent and resources. Key roles included:

- *Social Justice, Race and Equity Commission* – comprised of Commission members – responsible for driving open and honest discussions on issues of social justice, race, and equity that would lead to impactful recommendations
- *Coordinating Team* – comprised of the Commission chair, City Manager, consultants, and the Kettering Foundation liaison – responsible for designing and guiding the Commission process and supporting effective communications

- *Executive Team* – comprised of the Commission chair and eight (8) Subcommittee co-chairs – responsible for guiding the Subcommittee process
- *Subcommittees (4)* – comprised of Commission members and City staff liaisons – responsible for assessing and recommending actions, policies, and procedures that advance social justice and equity
- *Brookhaven Staff Liaisons* – comprised of City of Brookhaven employees – responsible for providing support to Subcommittees including critical data, best practice review and issue context



“I am appreciative that Brookhaven’s Mayor and City Council agreed unanimously to assess potential areas for improvement related to race and equity in city government. This is leadership in action, being proactive and always seeking ways to improve. It was indeed a pleasure to work alongside an esteemed group of city leaders and some 37 volunteers who gave of their precious time and talent. We’ve accomplished a lot in the 12 months. Special thanks to the Mayor, City Council, City Leadership under the direction of the City Manager Christian Sigman, and most importantly to all members of the Commission who have contributed to this chapter in the history of the City of Brookhaven.” – John H. Funny, Founding Chair, Social Justice, Race & Equity Commission

Community Input and Engagement

Brookhaven’s diverse community, including residents, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and other institutions alongside the City of Brookhaven staff, contractors, bidders, and public officials provided input in a variety of ways, including surveys, community pop ups, district-based public meetings, Civic Dinners, and public comment in Commission meetings. Engagement was coordinated with Brookhaven City staff, Civic Dinners staff, and the Chrysalis Lab team.

Community Pop-Ups

The Commission hosted seven pop-up events to share information about the Commission with Brookhaven passersby, and invite them to complete the Commission survey.²⁰ Pop-ups were held at popular Brookhaven locations including Northeast Plaza, Brookhaven Library, and the Murphey Candler Park Pool.

District Meetings

Four information sessions were held in each of the Brookhaven City Council districts. Council representatives were invited to attend the meeting in their district, provide greetings and participate in conversations. Attendees were also requested to complete a Commission survey.

Civic Dinners

A total of 41 Civic Dinners, virtual and in-person, were hosted by the Commission during the months of July and August. At each of these dinners, attended by 4 to 12 participants, Commission members and Brookhaven residents engaged in a structured discussion²¹ on race and inclusion. Five local restaurants were contracted to host dinners on a single night in August. This had a multi-pronged impact: restaurants, still recovering from Covid-19 financial impacts, were provided guaranteed income and became “de facto partners” in the Commission’s work; and 218 residents were incentivized to both patronize a local restaurant and join in this important conversation.

As noted, these dinners offered the most significant opportunity for authentic discussion and relationship building during the year-long process. Seventy-one percent (71%) of attendees reported an increased awareness of racial equity and more than 80% indicated that the experience inspired them to act on issues of race and inclusion. The Civic Dinners also spurred interest among local media, resulting in generous print and electronic coverage.²²

Input obtained from more than 363 community members indicated overwhelming support for the Commission and its charge: 87% indicated that they cared deeply or very much about issues of racial equity and 84% felt that the City should make these issues a significant or top priority.



Community input and engagement throughout Brookhaven. Purple dots indicate Community Pop-ups and magenta dots indicate District Meetings.

Subcommittee Stakeholder Input

Hiring & Retention



The Commission instigated the City of Brookhaven’s first ever employee survey. The survey queried current City staff in areas such as equity and inclusion, supervision, policies, and practice.

Mission, Vision and Charter



Subcommittee members reviewed documents and data and conducted personal interviews to gain a greater understanding of the historical context of Brookhaven’s mission and charter and comparatively analyzed how other cities embraced and embodied inclusiveness and equity in the text of their mission and vision statements, the processes they employed, and the policies and systems they adopted to sustain their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Police Accountability & Legitimacy



The Commission surveyed Brookhaven Police Department’s community partners in areas such as partnership successes, equity and inclusion, and practice.

Procurement & Contracting



The Commission sent surveys to vendors who had applied to do business with the City to gauge their experiences throughout all phases of the process.

Additional Perspective

- While the majority of the community input responses indicated strong support to explore and increase racial equity and inclusion in the City of Brookhaven, we note the following:
- The Commission heard from residents and stakeholders interested and willing to engage in dialogue; those who might oppose prioritizing issues of racial equity would likely be less willing to engage. This was experienced at several Commission pop-up events; when approached with information on the Commission and an invitation to participate in the survey, some residents bluntly ignored the offers and turned or walked away.
 - Also the Commission learned about two organized efforts to “disrupt” conversations during the August city-wide Civic Dinners. At one restaurant, residents positioned themselves at different tables and openly contested the validity and necessity of the dialogue. Table hosts had received special training and were able to effectively diffuse tensions.
 - As mentioned earlier, cultural and language barriers were problematic, particularly when communicating with Brookhaven’s Hispanic residents. Efforts were made to address this including partnering with Brookhaven nonprofits and recruiting several Commission members and City staff fluent in Spanish to help.
 - Covid-19 realities decreased comfort with in-person events and activities, resulting in less input.
 - Inclement weather and summer storms made it difficult to reliably plan and host outdoor events. Several pop-ups were either canceled and rescheduled or cut short due to unpredictable weather.

“I’ve learned to ask difficult questions”

“I’ve enjoyed being on this Commission.”

“I’ve gained a lot of knowledge.”

“I’ve learned a new lens for looking at issues, processes.”

20 See Survey in [Appendix](#)
21 See Discussion Guide in [Appendix](#)
22 See [Appendix](#)

Seeding Change

Cross-Cutting Equity Recommendations²³

#1 Establish a broad and diverse citizen-led group to provide accountability and sustain robust community engagement to ensure broad and diverse community insight and perspective, implement ongoing opportunities for exposure, dialogue, and training on principles of social justice, racial equity, and inclusion, and monitor implementation of the City of Brookhaven’s equitable policies and practices.

The Social Justice, Race & Equity Commission provided an unprecedented opportunity for Brookhaven residents to engage in the co-creation of a shared vision for the city’s future. Over the past 12 months, the Commission has centered issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of dialogue in Brookhaven’s diverse communities as the City has opened itself to a citizen-led review of its policies and practices. These issues resonated: input received from the Commission’s community input process indicates that more than 87% of Brookhaven residents cared “deeply” or “significantly” about racial equity; 84% felt that Brookhaven should prioritize a commitment to racial equity; and 100% felt it was important to continue dialogue on issues of social justice (i.e., dinners, book clubs, cultural events, etc.).

City of Brookhaven public officials are encouraged to receive the advice and counsel of residents on issues of racial justice and equity through active citizen groups (commissions and advisory boards). As demonstrated by the Commission’s success, citizen groups provide a stable and efficient vehicle to involve citizens in the democratic process and can play a key role in the “co-production” of public services.

“... citizens bring the practical, experiential knowledge that our institutional experience complements but cannot replicate. Citizens have passions about their problems, and they force us to look beyond short-term solutions. Engaged citizens would demand government take a more holistic view in solving wicked community problems and would expect us to bring the appropriate resources, including other government agencies and nonprofit organizations, to the table with us.”

Democracy Beyond the Ballot Box: A New Role for Elected Officials, City Managers, and Citizens by Valerie A. Lemmie

²³ Prioritized by Commission members

#2 Embed racial equity principles and practices in all City of Brookhaven departments and operations, including providing enterprise-level education and training of City staff, conducting equity analyses of programs, services and communications, and developing strategic goals and metrics to achieve and ensure equity.

Equitable practice is both a product and a process to reduce racial inequities and improve success for all groups. The City of Brookhaven can codify its aspirations for equity by formally adopting racial equity principles and practices to drive institutional and structural change in its decision-making, policies, practices, programs, and budgets.

Adopting an equity framework requires time, money, skills, and effort. It also requires the will and expertise to change policies, habits, and cultures by building staff and organizational capacity through training for new skills and competencies. Like Commission members, City of Brookhaven staff must begin to “normalize” conversations, understanding, and expectations of commonly held definitions of implicit bias and institutional and structural racism. This prepares them to operationalize racial equity, integrate racial equity into its routine decision-making processes, and develop and implement measurable actions to hold itself accountable.

Ninety-eight percent (98%) of Commission members supported the recommendation to embed racial equity principles and practices throughout the City. Commission members also highly recommended the following: “Establish an official ‘Office of Equity’ (75%); Embed responsibility for driving and monitoring equity in one or more staff roles (87.5%); Include diverse participants and discussions into

²⁴ <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/fundamentals/core-concepts/theory>
²⁵ Government Alliance on Race & Equity: <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/tools-resources/>

Racial equity goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequalities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.²⁴

all Brookhaven arts, cultural and community events (100%); and reach out to other Brookhaven institutions and agencies (i.e. housing, planning) to align equity goals and develop deliberate partnerships (100%).

Promising Practice: Racial Equity Core Team

The Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) recommends municipalities establish a “Racial Equity Core Team” responsible for designing, coordinating, and organizing racial equity plans and activities across a government authority or institution that is committed to equitable systems change. The Core Team often serves as the engine for change, leading the way, pulling others along, chugging through sometimes challenging terrain, keeping things on track, moving a diverse community of people in a common direction, and building the movement and momentum to arrive at the destination of equitable outcomes.²⁵

Cross-Cutting Equity Recommendations (continued)

#3 Incorporate and commit to deliberate, strategic inclusion of Brookhaven’s diverse racial and ethnic groups in all City of Brookhaven planning processes, boards, commissions, and other efforts. Prioritize increased engagement of Hispanic and immigrant communities.

“Cultural diversity is essential because our county, states, cities, and organizations are composed of individuals from various cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. As we work to improve relationships within our organizations and communities, we must learn how to facilitate conversations within our various groups that will lead to collaborative efforts to ensure efficient and effective government.”

- Georgia Municipal Services

The inclusive, holistic nature of equity, defined as “just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential,” provides a mandate for applying equity in all facets, levels, means, and policies of city planning.

The Commission’s work was challenged by its inability to create an effective avenue for the City’s Hispanic and immigrant communities to meaningfully participate and would have benefited from more customized strategies to engage these voices. One-hundred percent (100%) of Commission members deemed it critical for the City to better access and include Hispanic and other diverse voices in its processes.

By enabling and engaging in deliberate community outreach and relationship building across all Brookhaven communities, City leaders can gain an understanding of what people like or dislike about their community and the initiatives that could drive greater equity and access. Conversely, knowing that all ideas and inputs have been fairly addressed and incorporated, everyone gets the opportunity to understand perspectives or needs that differ from their own, resulting in greater understanding and acceptance of decisions and outcomes. As Brookhaven increases its understanding of the experiences and perspectives of its diverse communities, it will be better able to frame and communicate its work and priorities in ways that resonate and are aligned to citizens’ top priorities.

Indicators give policymakers essential insight into their current status and trends over time when it comes to issues of social, environmental, and economic concern. Since the early 20th century, indicators have become increasingly central to government decision-making processes. As inequality has moved to the center of the public discussion, government officials, scholars, and advocates have started to develop indicators that reflect both the level of inequality and whether things are improving.²⁶

#4 Conduct a comprehensive community “equity assessment” to understand residents’ perception, understanding, and vision of racial equity, diversity, access, and social justice. Consider aligning this assessment with other City planning processes.

A city-wide equity assessment will enable the City of Brookhaven to evaluate its real and perceived equity challenges and opportunities. The City could use the survey results to not only review and respond to Commission recommendations, but also to shape internal policy and partner with the community – nonprofits, business, civic groups, and faith communities – to bring results to life. In this way, an assessment acts as both a community process and a community solution.

Building on the data obtained through the Commission’s community input efforts, a city-wide assessment would query residents of all backgrounds about issues such as safety, fairness, respect, and how welcome they feel inside of their communities. Key to the success of such an assessment is gathering a diverse array of voices that may not be heard otherwise (see Cross-Cutting Recommendation #3).

Working through “trusted partners”

When surveying the Brookhaven Police Department’s community partners the Police Accountability & Legitimacy Subcommittee reached out directly to organizations and individuals, establishing relationships and urging participation. The expectation was that community leaders would partner to get the word out to a wider audience and ensure more voices are heard.

#5 Conduct an enterprise-wide knowledge management and technology assessment to ensure the City’s ability to capture key equity data.

Municipalities and communities yearn to use data as a tool to bring stakeholders together and make progress on ambitious goals such as increasing equitable outcomes, recognizing that data science and technology have the power to inform better questions, better answers, and better solutions.

In multiple instances, the Commission found accessing critical equity-related information (i.e. department data disaggregated by race and ethnicity) to be challenging, if not impossible. An enterprise-wide knowledge inventory and management capacity, supported by effective, operative technology, will ensure that the City of Brookhaven’s equity tools – goals and metrics, data acquisition and mining, knowledge management framework and practices – are appropriately and effectively applied.

Ninety-four percent (94%) of Commission members recommended that the City of Brookhaven conduct a comprehensive technologies assessment to ensure ability to capture key equity data. An optimal technology infrastructure would utilize maps, spatial analysis, and dashboards to model, sample, analyze, and interpret equitable experiences and outcomes for Brookhaven’s racial and ethnic communities. Measurement would take place at two levels – first, to measure the success of specific programmatic and policy changes, and second, to develop baselines, set goals, and measure progress towards goals.

Hiring & Retention

Hiring & Retention Subcommittee Overview

- Co-Chairs:** Tywana Minor*, William Naglich
- Members:** German Barreda, Rudy Beserra, Charlene Bowden, Catherine Murithi-Wohl, Kyle Williams, Thomas Woodward
- Staff Liaisons:** Helena Kallas, HR Generalist, Human Resource; Lillian Young, Director, Human Resources
- Meeting Schedule:** First Tuesday of each month

The Hiring and Retention Subcommittee began by seeking to understand the City of Brookhaven’s goals and priorities for its workforce, particularly related to ensuring diversity and racial equity in its ranks. The Subcommittee decided to form two smaller committees – one focused on hiring and the other on retention – to provide greater focus to their work.

Data Analysis: Committee members requested a range of data, ideally presented through a lens of race, ethnicity, and position, focusing on screening and hiring processes; hiring and retention statistics; and candidate recruitment outreach. Members also reviewed the Brookhaven Employee Handbook (scheduled to be updated in 2022). The statistics, inconsistently formatted and extracted from larger data sets, made thoughtful analyses difficult for Subcommittee members. Data on human resources processes such as new hire interviews, hiring panel composition and preparation, and exit interviews were also inconsistent.

Stakeholder Engagement: The Subcommittee felt strongly that it was important to hear perspectives on race and equity from current City of Brookhaven employees. Upon approval by the City, Subcommittee members launched the City’s first ever employee survey, to be analyzed by a third-party consultant. Fortunately, this occurred simultaneously with the arrival of the City of Brookhaven’s new Human Resource Director who is experienced in strategies for ensuring a diverse and equitable workforce.

Recommendation Development: A recommendation to conduct exit interviews was developed and shared with the full Commission as a sample for all Commission recommendations. Subcommittee members identified four additional areas around which to develop recommendations. Members were divided into pairs to further develop each of these.

*Commissioner Tywana Minor assumed the role of Commission Chair in September 2021. Commissioner William Naglich stewarded the Subcommittee through recommendation development.

Hiring & Retention Recommendations



Establish a consistent policy of conducting written and in-person exit interviews with all departing City of Brookhaven employees.

Background: Currently, the City does not have in place a consistent policy, practice, or standard for conducting exit interviews when employees leave their position with the City.

Rationale: The information collected in written and in-person exit interviews can give the City of Brookhaven a unique perspective on its performance and employee satisfaction relative to equitable and inclusionary practices, culture, management, and other factors. Exit interviews also reveal opportunities for improvement and help to ensure positive relationships with departing and existing staff. They indicate when and how equity and diversity strategies should be developed and implemented to effectively achieve meaningful results.



Develop and enforce equitable recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and retention policies and practices.

Background: Currently, the City does not have consistent practices or policies for the recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and retention of employees, including offering proactive training and advancement opportunities to all staff members.

Rationale: As the Commission began to look at best practices from other cities, coupled with those within Human Resources, they recognized that there was a lack of fundamental human resources-related practices. The absence of such policies can hinder efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the hiring and retention of employees. Additionally, according to a survey of City staff, while the majority of respondents agree that the City’s hiring process is fair and unbiased, a notable proportion provided a neutral response or disagreed.



Develop and implement policies and procedures to capture relevant equity and other personnel data for analysis to address trends and issues related to staff hiring and retention.

Background: Currently, the City is not utilizing its HR software consistently or to its full capabilities to collect data on staffing. The Commission-instigated survey was the first time the City has utilized surveying to engage employees and obtain constructive input.

Rationale: The City’s HR data entry and reporting relies heavily upon manual manipulation, as opposed to integrated systems and standards to produce customized reporting that allow for meaningful analysis. The usage of HR software to its full capabilities along with regular staff surveys will help the City to better understand staffing trends and areas of concern as the City works toward improving interactions with current staff and advancing deeper diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Mission & Vision

Mission & Vision Subcommittee Overview

- Co-Chairs:** Aixa Pascual, Tiffany Russell
- Members:** David Alexander, Vena Cain, Karen Cariello, Amy Corn, Jose Hardy, Josh Hearshen, Melissa Owen
- Staff Liaison:** Christian Sigman, City Manager
- Meeting Schedule:** First Thursday of each month

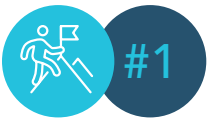
A city's mission and vision statements are foundational: the principles the city stands for, the values it embraces, and, ultimately, the underpinning of everything it does. The Subcommittee sought first to understand the process and context that resulted in Brookhaven's existing mission and vision statements. By "looking back" at Brookhaven's 2012 formation, members sought to compare the statements with Brookhaven's current values, communities, and aspirations.

Data Analysis & Stakeholder Engagement: The Subcommittee reviewed the mission and vision statements of other cities in Georgia and around the country and conducted interviews with diverse individuals, including Brookhaven cityhood advocates and founders, residents of the Lynwood Park community, Hispanic leaders, the Atlanta History Center, and the Georgia Municipal Association. City Manager Christian Sigman provided information on the City of Brookhaven's mission and vision statement development process in the aftermath of cityhood.

Recommendation Development: Over time, it became evident that The City of Brookhaven's current mission and vision statements did not reflect Brookhaven's current diversity or aspiration. Subcommittee members researched racial and social equity initiatives launched by other cities and municipalities²⁷, the processes they employed, and the policies and systems they adopted to sustain their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly from a community engagement perspective. Information gleaned from all these sources, as well as the Commission community input activity, was factored into final recommendations.

²⁷ The cities researched and interviewed included: San Antonio, Texas; Decatur, Georgia; Griffin, Georgia; Athens-Clarke County, Georgia; Minneapolis, MN.

Mission & Vision Recommendations



Utilize an open and transparent process that intentionally engages a diverse representation of community stakeholders to rewrite the City of Brookhaven's mission and vision statements. Include City staff, residents, business owners, students, and nonprofits.

Background: Brookhaven's mission and vision statements were drafted in 2014 without broad, diverse community input and were not adopted by a City Council resolution.

Rationale: Mission and vision statements are foundational to a city's identity and should reflect its values, communities, and aspirations. Brookhaven's diversity index is higher than the 11 counties in the metro region (71.9), yet the current mission and vision statements do not reflect the vibrancy, diversity, and uniqueness of the city nor its commitment to equity, inclusion, and social justice.



Conduct an equity review of the City of Brookhaven's charter every five years, concurrent with the City's mandated charter review.

Background: A city charter is a comprehensive document that outlines its foundational principles, laws, and procedures and determines powers and duties of the government. Every five years, the City of Brookhaven's charter must be reviewed by an appointed commission, per the charter itself.

Rationale: Without explicit guidance, the rules and procedures mandated by charters can perpetuate biases and inequities in how the City conducts itself. Regular and careful review and updates of the charter with an equity lens can help to uncover and address biases that infringe on equity and access to power.

Police Accountability & Legitimacy

Police Accountability & Legitimacy Subcommittee Overview

- Co-Chairs:** Shahrukh Arif, Monique Hudson
- Members:** Zaki Anwer, Davis Burnett, Loren Collins, Jeremiah Hinson, Kirk Nelson, Janis Niesse, Conni Todd, Kathy Wells
- Staff Liaison:** Major Shameta Jones-Harrell, Support Services Division Commander, Brookhaven Police Department
- Meeting Schedule:** Bi-weekly, Wednesdays each month

Initially established to develop recommendations and best practices to guide Brookhaven Police Department (BPD) policies, actions, and accountability regarding use of force, early in the process the Subcommittee chose to adopt a more holistic study of BPD’s operations. The Subcommittee gradually honed in on four focus areas and changed the name of the Subcommittee to “Police Accountability and Legitimacy”.

Data Analysis: Subcommittee members were provided with BPD’s annual data analysis report for 2020, containing key demographic data as well as force, arrest, and citation data. BPD also provided its official Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for use of force as well as citizen complaint/internal affairs data for the past five years. BPD also assisted the Subcommittee in gathering use of force and complaint data from surrounding jurisdictions, but the Subcommittee found it difficult to effectively compare the data.

Stakeholder Engagement: In May, five Subcommittee members participated in a full day training, where education was provided on the legal, behavioral, and functional factors related to the Use of Force. To gather input from members of the Brookhaven community, the Subcommittee disseminated a 15-question survey to over 60 BPD community partner organizations. Although useful data and information was gleaned from the 34 survey responses, the Subcommittee recognized that further input from and engagement of both community and officers would have been beneficial. The Subcommittee also discussed ideas on ways to interact with BPD officers but were unable to execute an engagement.

Recommendation Development: The Subcommittee formed four smaller teams to write recommendations. The recommendations are informed by the data analysis, stakeholder engagement findings, and additional research.

Police Accountability & Legitimacy Recommendations



Uniformly capture and report policing data to provide an accurate representation of BPD’s interactions with people who identify as Hispanic as compared to other races.

Background: When arresting an individual, BPD officers capture the race of the individuals via self identification and/or officer observation. Two 2020 data points drive this recommendation: 64% of Brookhaven’s overall arrests are non-residents; and Blacks and Hispanics made up 79% of arrests in 2020 despite representing less than 35% of Brookhaven’s population. Additionally, while this recommendation focuses on arrests, calls for service on the part of both citizens and the police should be examined with an equity lens.

Rationale: Implicit and explicit bias, race-crime stereotypes, intragroup bias, in-group favoritism, stereotype threat, and dehumanization in policing interactions, all can lead to racially disparate policing practice. To address the factors contributing to this over representation in Brookhaven, accurate and reliable racial and ethnic data and reporting is crucial.



Increase BPD’s cultural awareness and competency by implementing a number of tools and programs, including an intercultural competency assessment, equity audit, intercultural council, and certification program.

Background: Brookhaven’s diversity index is 76.5, indicating a relatively high level of diversity. While diversity has many benefits, it also increases the likelihood of errors and miscommunications due to a lack of cultural awareness. This can also make it hard to build authentic partnerships with groups of different cultures.

Rationale: Bias and a lack of cultural competence negatively impacts equitable policing and social justice. BPD should assess its cultural competency and provide training and programs that provide a holistic approach to the cultural and racial sensitivities of demographic, cultural, religious, gender, age, and other minorities. This is imperative to promote equitable policing and better judgment on how to engage multiple races and ethnicities.



Increase the availability of mental health professionals dedicated to the City of Brookhaven such that they can be called on at night and on weekends to assist and/or intervene in appropriate situations with the BPD.

Background: In October 2020, the BPD began implementing the use of mental health professionals during business hours to decrease the use of force and assist persons experiencing a behavioral issue with access to medical care rather than entering the criminal system. Currently, these professionals are unavailable outside of traditional business hours.

Rationale: According to the 2020 Community Crime Map, Brookhaven experiences a 40% increase in disturbances and crime on the weekends. Those who are suffering from mental illness should be afforded the opportunity to receive medical/mental assistance rather than enter the criminal system if it can be avoided.



Foster greater community trust by 1) annually surveying the Brookhaven community on their perceptions of BPD, 2) redesigning BPD’s community engagement approach to be program- and goals-oriented, 3) regularly training officers on community policing, and 4) contracting an external auditor to review complaint data.

Background: BPD has worked hard to foster trust in the community by being community-facing, hosting events open to the public, and building partnerships. However, it currently lacks a process for tracking and measuring its progress, identifying potential shortcomings, gauging proficiency in community policing, and ensuring fair and impartial treatment of complaints.

Rationale: The activities outlined above are embedded with a layer of accountability, which naturally breeds greater trust. True community trust and partnership between BPD and marginalized communities benefits everyone. BPD is already investing in this area, and this recommendation seeks to bolster this investment in a meaningful way.

Procurement & Contracting

Procurement & Contracting Subcommittee Overview

Co-Chairs: Jim Moses, Alex Thomas*
Members: Zaki Anwer, Chris Corces-Zimmerman, John Funny, Danita Knight, Marco Palma, Anibal Torres, Beth Wendl
Staff Liason: Steve Chapman, Deputy City Manager
Meeting Schedule: Second Monday of each month

The Procurement and Contracting Subcommittee began by seeking to develop an understanding of how the City issues Requests for Proposals (RFPs), contracts, and engages with vendors.

Data Analysis: While Subcommittee members requested data on three years of City contracts, the City was able to provide only the past year of data, citing a lack of availability. Despite this limitation, Subcommittee members analyzed the single year data in-depth. One member also did an analysis of where the contracts were located within the city and the percentage of funding awarded to firms owned by minorities. The Subcommittee also analyzed best practices and case studies from other cities²⁸ on how they have implemented equitable measures within their contracting system and reviewed industry best practices²⁹.

Stakeholder Engagement: Wanting to hear the voices of current, former, and potential contractors, the Subcommittee developed a survey sent to vendors who had applied to do business with the City. While more than 1,100 vendors were contacted via survey, less than 50 were returned to City of Brookhaven staff. While some conclusions were drawn from this data, the Subcommittee recommends the survey be sent annually to firms applying for contracts with the City and that an outside firm manage the survey in the future to ensure anonymity and garner a more robust response.

Recommendation Development: The Subcommittee formed smaller teams to develop recommendations that address various stages of the procurement and contracting process. The recommendations align with practices in place in other cities that have taken intentional steps toward an equitable procurement process.

*Commissioner Alex Thomas resigned from the Commission in August 2021. Commissioner Jim Moses stewarded the Subcommittee through recommendation development.

28 Cities reviewed were Seattle, WI and Boston, MA
29 Review included the US Government Accounting Office and the ISO Procurement Policies and Procedures.

Procurement & Contracting Recommendations



Ensure that RFPs are written in plain language and minimize the use of technical jargon when appropriate.

Background: Upon review, the Subcommittee felt that language used in the City of Brookhaven’s procurement and contracting process documents was overly technical, voluminous, and confusing.

Rationale: Writing documents in a clear concise manner will help to attract a more diverse vendor base and offer clarity to both the City and the contractor on what determines the successful basis of the contract award.



Implement a simplified, easily understood, accessible, and streamlined contract process and communication channel for all vendors.

Background: The City of Brookhaven participates in the market as a purchaser through its procurement and contracting process. In 2020, 7.5% of the contracts totaling 2.2% of the total procurement-spend were awarded to vendors identified as minority-owned. Furthermore, a survey of vendors revealed that 73% of the respondents who identified as a minority-owned businesses were not aware of the City's procurement process.

Rationale: Access to and simplicity of messaging is an essential part of fostering an inclusive procurement process and addressing structural barriers that exist within the system. Simplifying the procurement process, engaging and educating vendors on the procurement process, and maintaining an active communication channel can bridge the information gap between the City and vendors.



Initiate more frequent reviews/ assessments of the City's procurement and contracting processes.

Background: Survey respondents reported varying levels of satisfaction with different components of the City's procurement process. Many respondents omitted questions, and a majority of those who did answer responded that they were "unable to rate" their satisfaction level, the clarity or ease of the process, etc.

Rationale: The vendor survey's lack of responses made the need for a more robust assessment of the procurement process all the more evident. Inequities are often "hidden" in systemic processes and not immediately evident. Implementing regular and thorough reviews to assess the procurement and contracting processes would provide reliable ways of discovering inequities present in the system as well as specific areas where improvement is needed.



Commit to awarding 33.3% of all funds spent by the City on procurement and contracting to businesses identified as minority-owned, with the aim to increase this percentage by at least 5% per year, each subsequent year.

Background: Of the 53 contracts awarded in the 2020 fiscal year, only 4 (7.5%) of all contracts were awarded to businesses that identified as minority-owned. This equates to a total of \$657,997.24 or 2.2% of all expenses procured by the City of Brookhaven in the 2020 fiscal year.

Rationale: While the Commission was unable to secure more than one year's data for analysis, these findings signal a substantial inequity in the procurement and contracting process. This recommendation provides tangible targets and expected benchmarks that the City can aim for and use to measure its success in implementing an equitable procurement and contracting process.

A Starter List of Resources

Georgia Municipal Association (GMA): GMA is the only state organization representing all 537 municipal governments in Georgia and is responsible for providing legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit, and technical consulting services. It offers numerous resources related to equity and inclusion, including thought leadership, practices, and initiatives designed to facilitate diverse and meaningful conversations between City leaders, employees, communities, and more.

ICMA: ICMA is the world's leading association of professional city and county managers and other employees who serve local governments. ICMA advances a focused commitment to race, equity, and social justice to achieve and support thriving communities. It offers a suite of resources to help governments achieve equity and social justice, to affirm human dignity, and to improve the quality of life for the individual and the community.

National League of Cities (NLC): NLC is an organization of city, town and village leaders who are focused on improving the quality of life for their current and future constituents. It offers over 300 resources on race and equity, including articles, guides, events, and initiatives.

Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE): GARE is a national network of governments working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. It supports jurisdictions that are working toward this goal, and builds local and regional collaborations that are broadly inclusive.

Racial Equity Tools (RET): RET is a curated website that offers tools, research, tips, curricula, and ideas for those working to increase their understanding and to help those working for racial justice at every level – in systems, organizations, communities, and the culture at large.

Kettering Foundation: The Kettering Foundation is a nonprofit operating foundation rooted in the tradition of cooperative research. Kettering's primary research question is, what does it take to make democracy work as it should? Kettering's research is distinctive because it is conducted from the perspective of citizens and focuses on what people can do collectively to address problems affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation.

To an Equitable Brookhaven

The Commission has taken a big, bold step on a long-term path of greater equity and access for the City of Brookhaven’s current and future residents. Success will require a continued commitment to education, training, and purposeful action that ensures all Brookhaven citizens feel welcomed to participate fully in the promise of true democracy. This report, and its inclusive recommendations, are the Commission’s offering toward a more equitable Brookhaven and will hopefully serve as a blueprint for cities throughout the region, the state, and the country.

“Community cannot for long feed on itself; it can only flourish with the coming of others from beyond, their unknown and undiscovered brothers.”
– Howard Thurman

To view the appendix, please visit brookhavenga.gov/SJREC.



...And, yes, we are far from polished,
far from pristine, but that
doesn’t mean we are
striving to form a union that is perfect.
We are striving to forge our union with purpose.
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters
and conditions of man.
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us
but what stands before us.
We close the divide because we know to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside.
We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another.
We seek harm to none and harmony for all...

...But one thing is certain.
If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love
becomes our legacy, and change our children’s birthright.

So let us leave behind a country better
than the one we were left with...



– Amanda Gorman, National Youth Poet Laureate
Excerpts from *The Hill We Climb*

**"Until the great mass of the people
shall be filled with the sense of
responsibility for each other's welfare,
social justice can never be attained."**

– Helen Keller



Working at the intersection of social impact, racial equity, and strategy, Chrysalis Lab builds capacity for innovative and practical responses to complex social challenges.

chrysalislab.org